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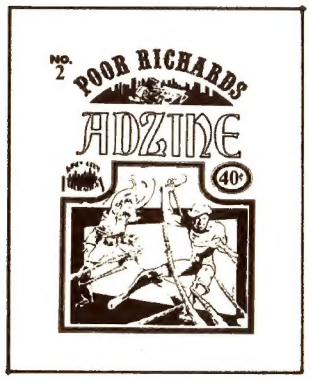

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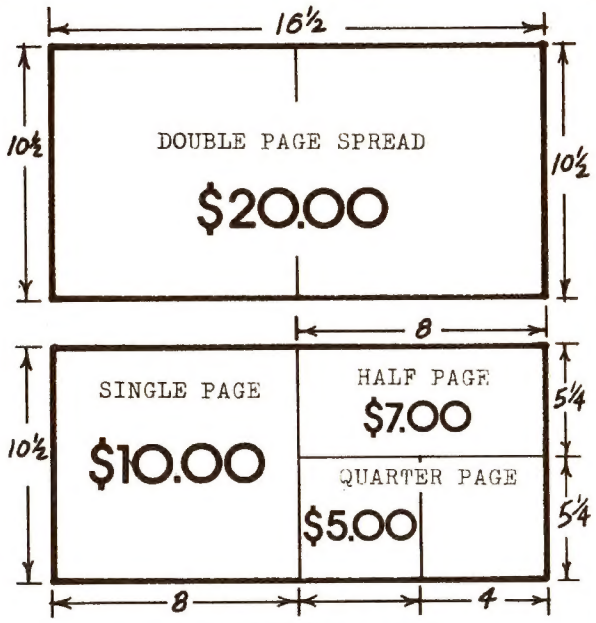

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EDITORIAL

As you can see by this issue, we did receive enough support to publish another issue of POOR RICHARD'S , but to reach our goal we need many more subscribers! Since last month I have received many letters of comment on PRA#1, most of you readers have some very fine ideas but how can we hope to improve if you don't send along that $3.00 for a years subscription? So dig down in your packets, 12 issues of POOR RICHARD'S ADZINE for only $3.00, you won't reget it!!!

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I would like to thank everyone who helped make this issue possiable and remember, only with your support can PRA become the best adzine around.

Before I forget I would like to thank Unique Publications for permission to print that article last issue.

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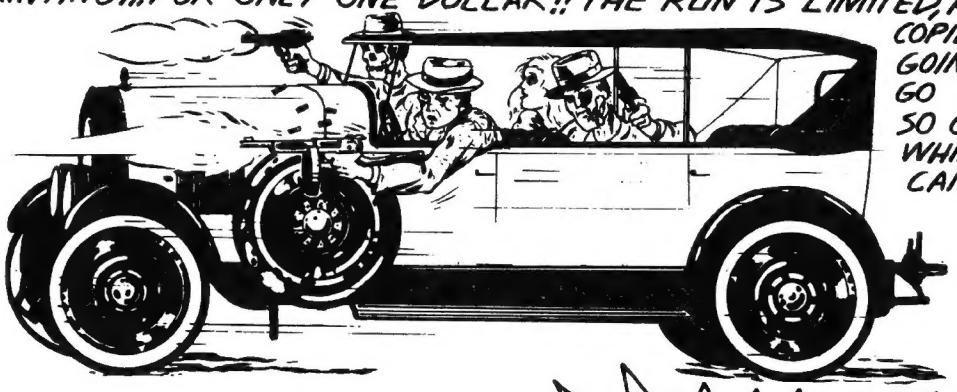

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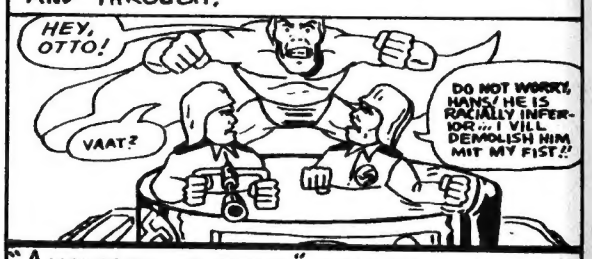

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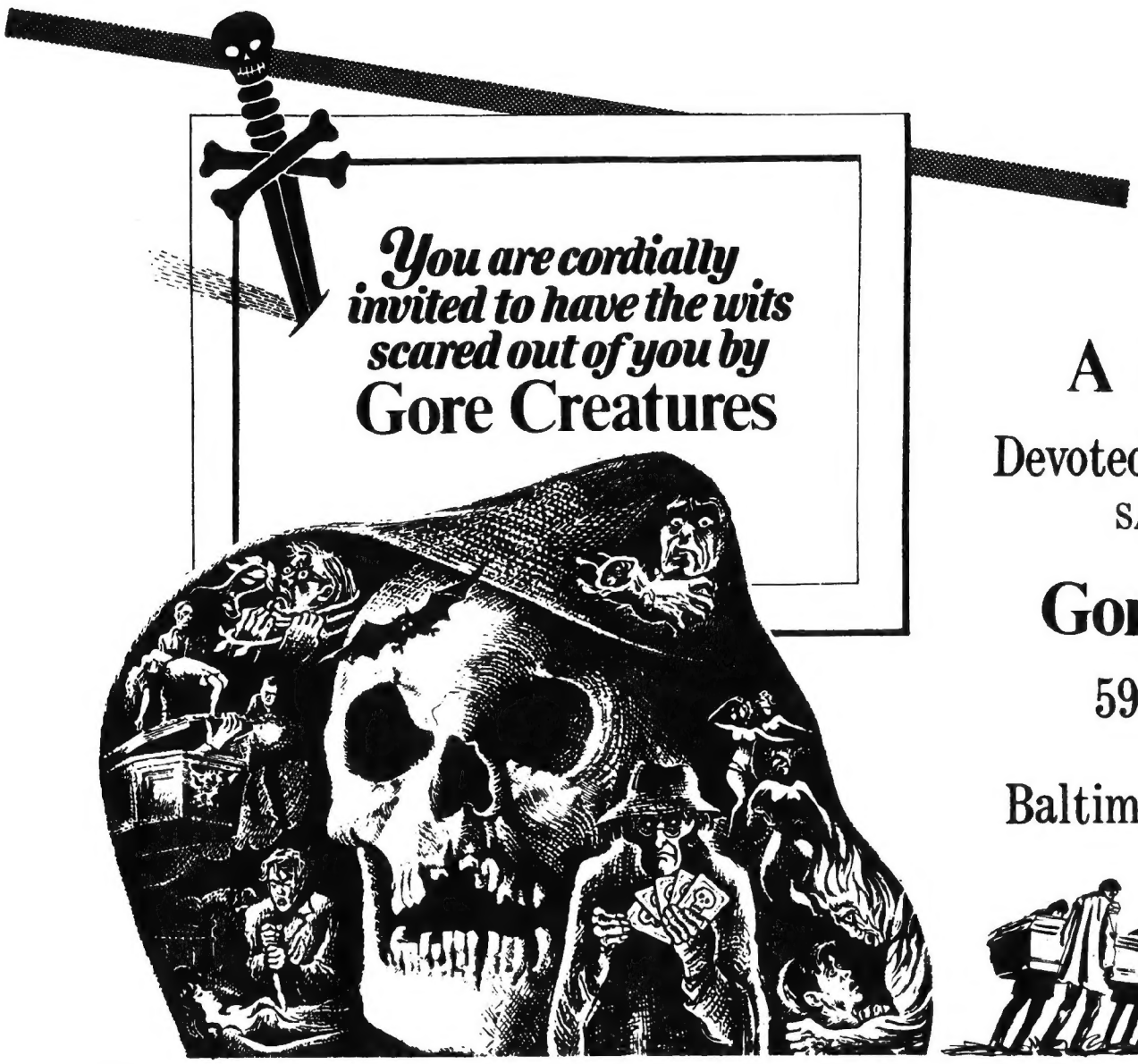

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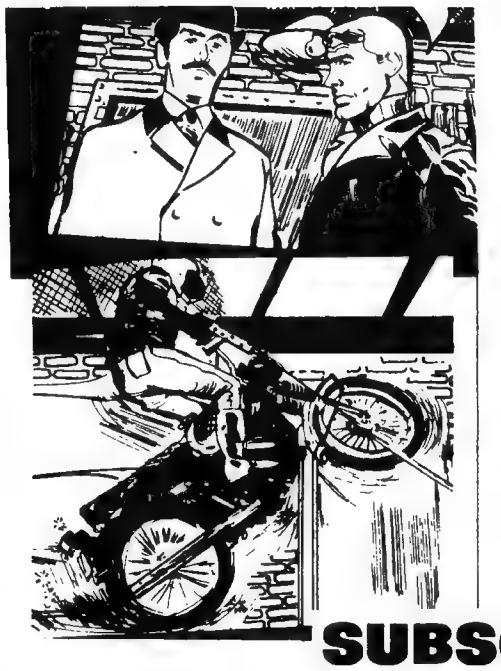

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TWSA

The Water Street Adventure is a new fanzine now being prepared by fan writer Ron Fortier who's address is 13 A Water Street. If you are not as yet familiar with this literary-minded young man then keep your eyes open in fandom in '74.

Ron's prolific ramblings will be gracing the pages of such zines as SPACE & TIME, CHRONICLE, CPL, THE GOLDEN ADVENTURE, SEVENTH WORLD COMICS and many more. His most ambitious undertaking to date is the creation of his own zine.

TWSA will be a 9/6 photo-offset zine devoted to high adventure in whatever form or media it appears. This means there will be both strips and prose fiction filling the 44 pages of TWSA along with features and articles by the best talents in fandom. There will also be one or two professional names along the way.

The premiere issue will feature a special section on Freedom Fighter. FF is the fan hero created by Canadian fan artist Art Cooper for the SPECTRUM zines. He is considered to be one of the best action heroes ever to appear in fandom. Art has drawn a brand new FF adventure especially for this issue which is preceeded by a special FF prologue by fandom's own super-writer Tom Fagan. Follow this by an indepth history of FF by his creator and still another strip makes this section one of the highlights of this jam packed first issue.

Fiction includes a horror tale by Mr. Fagan and a different kind of war story by Ron. Topping the text portions finally is a column on heroic fantasy by well known S&S fan author, Jeffrey May.

And just in case we haven't sold you on TWSA yet, our art line-up will dispel your doubts and put your cares to rest for within it's covers you'll find the talents of MARTIN GREIM, JOE STATON, AL BRADFORD, JOE JACOUZZI, HOWARD BENDER, FRANK MILLER, TOM ZIUKO, CHRIS CODY, BRUCE PATTERSON, OWEN MC CARON, JOHN CRAIG, CLYDE CALDWELL and many more.

We intend to offer fans the best in action zines and hope you will kindly give us your support in this venture. As you read this TWSA is still months away from the printers. You can reserve your advance copy now.

The print run will be limited, only 300 copies will be printed, so if you don't want to miss out, order now. Send 75¢ now or for you more timid souls, watch this magazine for sale ad. Thanks for reading this:

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13 A Water Street
Somersworth, N.H.
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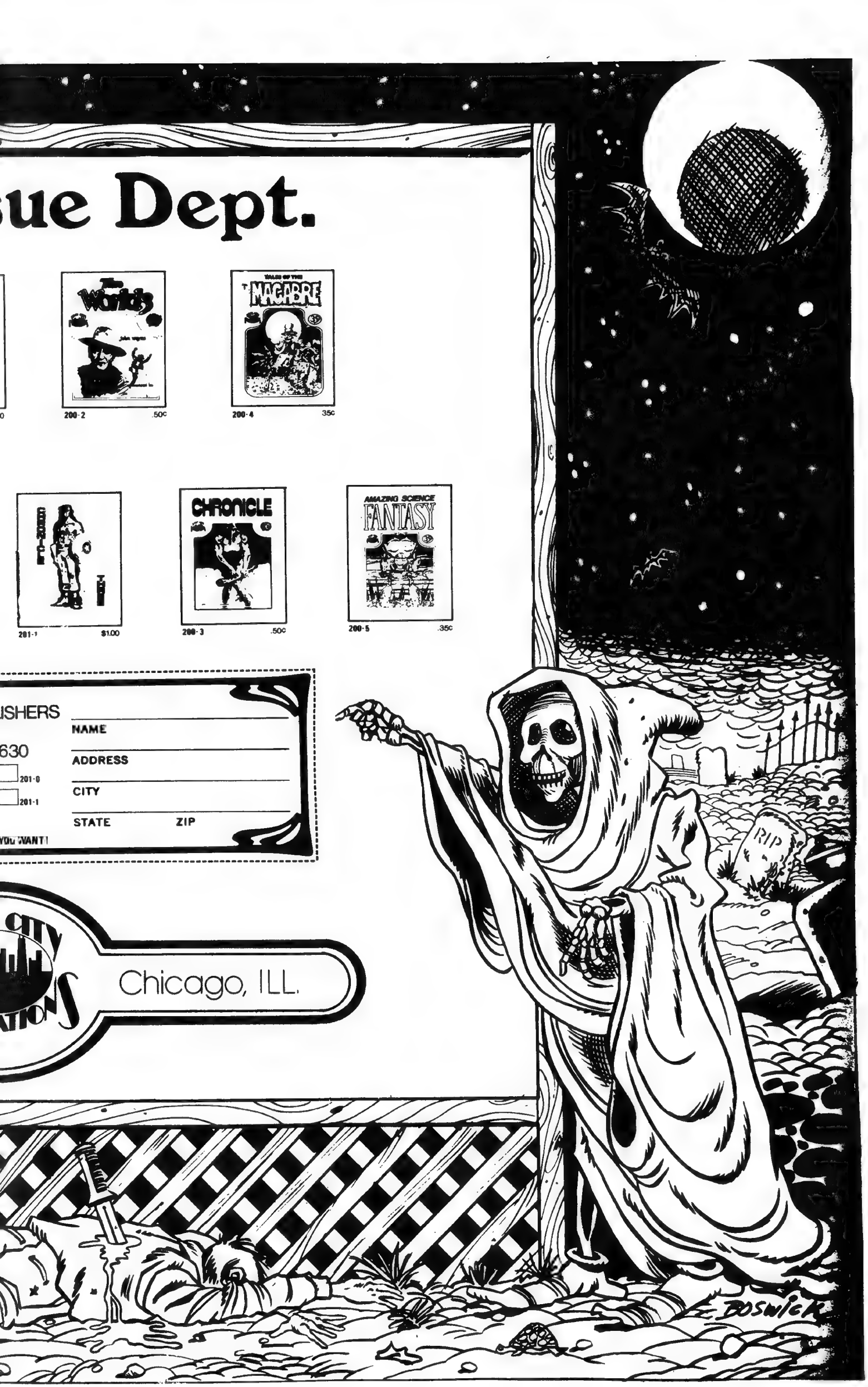


FORTIER'S FANDOM

A newspaper is windblown across New York's Central Park and settles face up in the dirt. It's title heading proudly heralds: PULITZER TO JOE GILL!!

Joe Gill? If your an avid comix fan, you of couse have recognized that name. Mr. Gill is the senior scripter at Charlton Co. He in fact has held the position for so long he is often referred to as Mr. Bread and Butter. Thus it is a safe assumption to call him a competent literary professional. Yet is that talent deserving of such an austere award as the famed Pulitzer? And if so when and where did this prestigious event occur?

The answer to that is as unique as the news itself and thus the real subject of this column.

The above mentioned newspaper was actually seen on page 8, panel 3, lower right corner in the story The Entopy Twins from E-MAN #2. It was a classic example of the humor owned, permeated and evolved from the brightest new artist in comix today, Joe Staton.

From the time Joe came to Charlton several years ago he has set about asserting his creative abilities with a great deal of flare and a distinct brand of humor rarely seen these days of national gloom. Staton is a pupil of the black-comedy style of laugh busting. It is at best described as a meta-physical cross between cartoonist Gahan Wilson and creep master Alfred Hitchcock. This was particularly evident in his early ghosts stories done with the previously tagged Mr. Gill.

At the time of his arrival at Charlton, things were down-right stagnant. Although editor Sal Gentile was keeping a firm hand at the helm, the ship of creativity just wasn't going anywhere. Gill was writing practically everything from the war mags to the love titles almost single handedly. Thus if there existed any similarities among the plot-lines, one can easily excuse the author. He was indeed suffering a brain-drain no other writer is his right mind would ever want to submit himself to. Yet be that as it may, the truth of the matter remained. Gill was using the same two or three plots in all his ghost stories issue after issue.

The most typical went: A-Hero discovers monster. B-Monster threatens the world. C-Hero destroys monster. Over and over we saw this used until it became a Charlton legend.

For a new artist launching his career it proved nothing less than a monumental challenge to be met and, if humanly possible, overcome. Staton could not alter the story-line but he could control the appearance of his characters. Neal Adams and Jim Aparo are considered the best facial artists for capturing beauty. Joe on the other hand found himself fascinated by the opposite side of the coin. How do you draw a truly ugly face? Faces so distorted and fiendish they would haunt the reader for years to come. Thus it was that his black humor began to surface in the last few pages of PRIMUS. In #6 Joe brought to life an oriental villian named Yang and made him the embodiment of every Fu Manchu type that ever graced a cinematic screen. From the long thin mustache, bald head, sun glasses and delicate feminine fingers, Yang was a classic villain in every respect.

The humor remained prevalent in #7 when the story featured a look-alike Richard Nixon being kidnapped by a look-alike Hubert Humphrey. For Joe it was a fun job he could easily get into with his knack for kooky caricatures. Needless to say it came off extremely well.

By the time PRIMUS had folded, Charlton had changed editorial leadership and was now being presided over by Mr. George Wildman. One of the new editors initial projects was the hiring of ex-Warren staffer, Nicola Cuti to aid Gill in handling the scripting chores. It was a significant move for everyone connected with the company. Not only would Mr. Cuti quickly rise to the ranks of Assistant Editor, but he would also have a major role in returning Charlton to the super-hero business.

Meanwhile Staton was still experimenting with his sombre visual gags. In GHOSTLY HAUNTS 32 Gill wrote a tale entitled Never Walk On A Grave! Staton was given the art assignment and decided to add a few personal touches of his own. The story itself concerned a freaky motorcycle gang invading a quiet country cemetary just for kicks. At the tale's conclusion they are spooked away by the burial grounds ghostly caretaker. Not too exciting a drama and one easily forgotten except for the alertness of some wary fans. Why should this particular story hold anyone's attention? The answer is the tombstone lettering; for buried in this small graveyard are:

N. Cuti 1804-page 2, panel 3.
Carter Primus-page 3, panel 1.
Sarge Steel -page 4, panel 3 and lastly
G. Wildman -page 7, panel 1.

It was not until after the book had been printed and released that editor Wildman discovered the mini-logos. Unaware of Joe's intentions, Wildman immediately called Cuti and asked, "Doesn't Joe like us?" After a good deal of persuasion, Nicola finally convinced George it was a joke. Perhaps a little weird, but still a joke.

When fandom learned of the incident, the grape-vine instantly spread the word-Watch out for Staton, he is SNEAKY!

HAUNTED LOVE 4, the cover story was Reunion, penned by Gill and art by Joe. Two young lovers are sailing when their boat capsizes and the girl drowns. The young man is rescued and an intense underwater search is made for the girl's body. Heading the group of scuba divers is none other than Joe's old series hero, Carter Primus. (page 4, panel 5)

Of course all of Mr. Staton's sight gags are not so blatantly obvious. One of his favorite tricks is using magazines and newspapers strewn about his panels to add extra touches of macabre gaeity. THE MANY GHOST OF DOCTOR GRAVES 41 is the only Charlton ghost mag that ever featured a special preview host page. In this particular page, done by Joe, Dr. Graves bids the readers welcome to the issue, while relaxing in the comfort of his study. In his lap is a book titled the Annals of Dr. Graves. On the floor to his right is another heavy tome labelled NECROMANICON, an honest clue to the artist's affection for the works of H. P. Lovecraft. In panel 3 there are several books scattered on a bed. They include E-Man, a skillful plug, and a curious volume advising the reader how to LEARN BRAIN SURGERY AT HOME.

By the end of Joe's second year at Charlton, George Wildman had finally given his staff the go ahead on the creation and development of new super heroes. People such as Steve Ditko, Tom Sutton and Ernie Colon were designated as perspective artists for the new series. Joe was also included but it would be a lie to say he was enthusiastic about doing a long john feature.

His favorites were either sci-fi characters like DC's Adam Strange or Marvels ace sorceror Dr. Strange. The other brightly clad union members he endured with a giant grain of salt. His main criticism had always been that most super-heroes were too damn serious. Always stuffy and relevant. Certainly not what a carefree nonchalant young artist wanted to get involved with.

Fortunately along came Nicola Cuti who just happened to be of the same opinion as Joe. Realizing that both he and Joe saw a tremendous potential to a light-hearted whimsical strip, he proposed they use the Golden Age Plastic Man as a guide to emulate. Thus they would combine the best elements of the comics, drama, action and above all else humor. It was the birth of E-MAN.

E-Man rapidly took shape on paper and easily won Editorialapproval. Whereas things went with Charlton's other ventures, E-MAN in the end was the only super-hero title to see eventual print.

His debut was astonishing to say the least and sales figures have already placed it as the all time highest seller of any Charlton mag in the history of that firm. A truly remarkable achievement due solely to the ingenuity of those three visionaries, Wildman, Cuti and Staton. E-MAN demonstrated Cuti's own versital punning abilities and what can you say about an exotic dancer named Nova Kane! Too Much! of course Joe has the liberal opportunity to once more employ his own devious talents. Sprinkled throughout E-MAN #1 are newspapers titles connecting the sci-fi classic Lord of the Rings Trilogy with the current Watergate activities. Page 6 panel #1- "Sauron to Testify!" Page 7-panel #5-"Baggins Indicted!"

Of course Joe could never let his delectable Miss Kane escape his poignant wit. Page 8, panel #4 shows the generously endowed young lady opening her apartment door on which is prominently stencilled "Kane 36-C". So it goes to this day.

Joe Staton is not the first artist to include side-line humor in his work, but because he is a talented individual, his brand of asides are accordingly his alone. They not only offer the wary reader an added bit of enjoyment but they reveal quite a bit about their perpetrator. Many art pros today regard drawing comics as merely a means of earning a weekly check. Thus they do their work, submit the final pages and cash their checks. No less or more is ever given. To them comics is strictly a profit making endeavor..

Thank God there are still men like Joe Staton who realize the other part of the industry. They see comics for the entertainment they are capable of inducing. They comprehend the joy in a reader's heart and the laugh of child when amused. For this laughter they prevail and in doing so they are always at ready to give us more than what was asked for. They are the true professionals, ever weird, ever funny and ever men to be admired and respected.

Joe Staton is one of these men, one of the best!

THE END

Thanks to Hank Luttrell and Joe Staton for the "Rockin' Rabbit" strip an excellent example of Graphic Story Telling Technique.

ROCKIN' RABBIT IN SHOCKING ROCK

AND NOW... IT IS MY GREAT PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE... ROCKIN' RABBIT AND HIS BAND, RAZZLE DAZZLE!

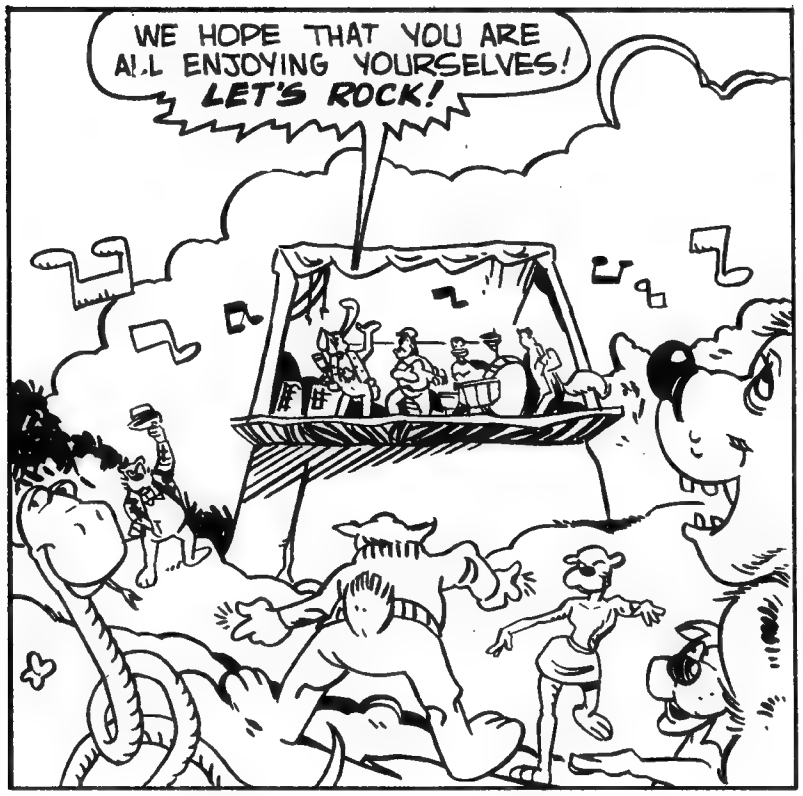
RAZZZZLE DAZZLE, OH WE'RE RAZZLE DAZZLE, AND WE'RE HERE TO DAZZLE YOU...

SCRIPT- HANK LUTTRELL
ART- JOE STATON

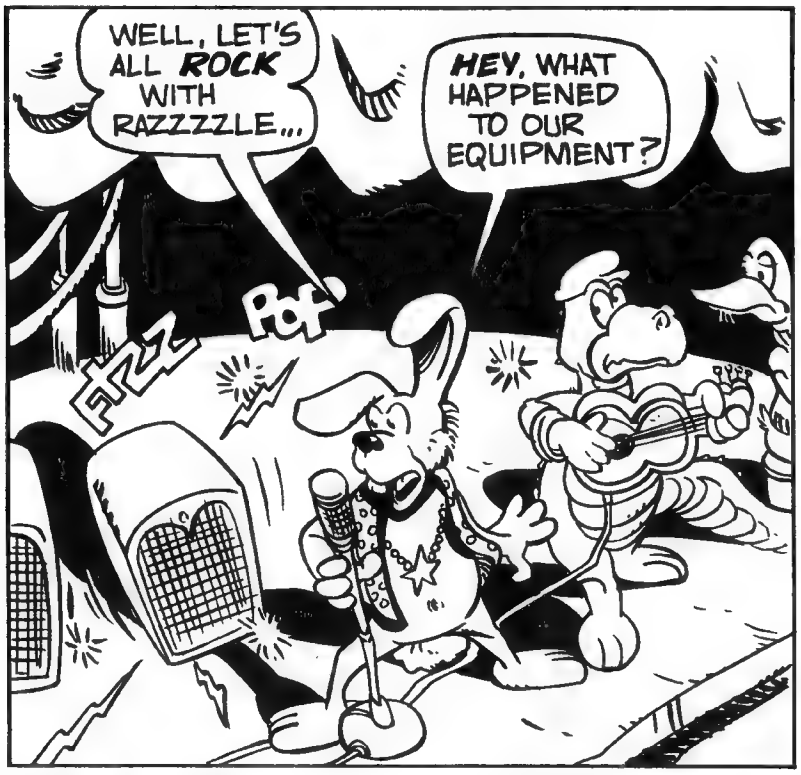
...AND LET ME INTRODUCE THE MEMBERS OF THE BAND... HERE WE HAVE GITAR GATOR... PLAY IT FOR US, GITAR!

...AND DRUMMER DUCK... SOCK IT TO US, DRUM!

AND SAXAPHONE SQUIRREL... BLOW US A TUNE, SAX!


WE HOPE THAT YOU ARE ALL ENJOYING YOURSELVES! LET'S ROCK!

OH, RAZZLE DAZZLE, AND WE'RE GOING TO DAZZLE YOU...
OH! THAT ROCKIN' RABBIT IS REALLY GREAT!
YES... RAZZLE DAZZLE IS A HEAVY BAND!


WELL, LET'S ALL ROCK WITH RAZZZZLE...
HEY, WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR EQUIPMENT?
FZZ
POP

I THINK WE RAN OUT OF ELECTRICITY, ROCK!
IMPOSSIBLE! YOU CAN'T RUN OUT OF ELECTRICITY. CHECK CHIPMUNK, YOU'RE OUR MANAGER- YOU FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN BUCKY BADGER'S AND WALLY WOLVERINE'S FAULT!

WELL, THEY OFFERED TO BRING THE WIRE HERE CHEAPER THAN ANYBODY ELSE...
WHAT DO BADGER AND WOLVERINE HAVE TO DO WITH THIS?
YOU HIRED THEM... OH, NO!

WELL, ALL WE CAN DO IS FOLLOW THE WIRE AND SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO IT. CHECK, GATOR, YOU COME WITH ME - THE REST OF YOU STAY AND TRY TO ENTERTAIN THE FOLKS!
2

LOOK AT THIS *MESS!* THEY DIDN'T CARE *HOW* THEY DID THEIR JOB!

IT ISN'T MY FAULT!

THIS IS TERRIBLE!

THESE TWO GUYS JUST CAME UP AND RAMMED THIS POLE RIGHT DOWN INTO OUR LIVING ROOM!

DON'T BLAME ME!

I CERTAINLY CAN'T IMAGINE WHERE THIS WIRE IS GOING TO GO NEXT... YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE HAD BUCKY BADGER AND WALLY WOLVERINE DO YOUR WORK FOR YOU, CHECK!

HOW WAS I TO KNOW THEY'D MESS IT UP?

BECAUSE THEY ALWAYS MESS THINGS UP!

LOOK, ROCK! THE WIRE IS BROKEN UP AHEAD!

COME ON, GUYS, LET'S FIX IT SO WE CAN FINISH PLAYING FOR THE DANCE!

NOT SO FAST, CHECK! THIS WHOLE JOB NEEDS TO BE DONE OVER, THIS TIME THE *RIGHT* WAY!

LOOK! THAT WIRE IS HANGING IN THE WATER!

THOSE BABY RABBITS ARE PUTTING ON THEIR SWIMMING TRUNKS! THEY MAY BE ELECTROCUTED WHEN THEY GET IN THE WATER!

WAIT! DON'T GO IN THE WATER!

HUH!?

ZZZT!

KRAKKLE!

MEANWHILE...

FIRST HONEST DAY'S WORK WE'VE EVER DONE, BUCKY.

YAH, WALLY, YAH. NOW, LET'S DIVIDE THE MONEY, OKAY?

SURE. ONE FOR YOU, TWO FOR ME...

HEY! THAT ISN'T FAIR!

NOW, WAIT A MINUTE...AND TWO FOR YOU, SEE? THREE FOR ME...

THAT'S BETTER!

BACK AT THE POND...

WAIT! DON'T GO IN THE WATER! YOU'LL BE HURT BY THE ELECTRICITY!

POP!

HELP!

ZZT!

BZZZZT!

DON'T GO OUT ON THE BOARD, GITAR, IT'S ALMOST READY TO FALL INTO THE WATER! CHECK, GET THAT TREE BRANCH!

I'VE GOT IT!

NOW, HOLD ON *TIGHT!*

BZZZZT!

POP!

ZZZZT!

WE SHOULDN'T TRY TO FIX THAT WIRE OURSELVES, IT'S TOO DANGEROUS! GITAR, YOU GO GET AN ELECTRICIAN, HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO. CHECK, YOU COME WITH ME— WE'RE GOING TO VISIT WALLY WOLVERINE AND BUCKY BADGER!

HOW COME YOUR PILE IS SO MUCH BIGGER THAN MINE, WALLY?

A MERE OPTICAL ILLUSION, MY BOY...

OKAY, YOU GUYS—YOU CAN'T PULL A FAST ONE ON ME! YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO TAKE DOWN ALL THAT STUPID WIRE YOU PUT UP!

CAREFUL OF THOSE BABY BIRDS!

I STILL DON'T SEE WHY WE HAVE TO FIX THIS STUPID HOLE IN THE BEAVERS' PILE OF STICKS!

SHUT UP AND SHOVEL.

END

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MITEY MARVEL!
NO WAY!!
I DON'T LIKE IT EITHER! IT'S INTERFERING WITH MY NORMAL GROWTH PATTERNS! BUT UNTIL THE LIMBO LEAGUE STRAIGHTENS THE WHOLE THING OUT, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO PLAY IT BY EAR!!
GOODKUT!
POOF!

THE MITEY BUGGERS
MARVELMOUSE!
HANLEY
GREAT! I LOVE IT SO FAR! SAY, HOW'S ABOUT A DOUGHNUT?
I WAS A BROWN MOUSE IN A WORLD OF BLACK RATS!! IT WAS TUFF GOIN' IN THE SUBWAYS OF BIG CITY.
THEY TAUNTED ME WITH THEIR SUPERIORITYNESS - SAID THE BEST MOUSES WERE ALL BLACK!!
MIGHTY RAT GUNG GITCHA!

ALL AMERICAN JACK!
HE'S BACK! THAT'S RIGHT! FAMED FIGHTER OF WORLD WAR II IS BACK ON THE TRACK! WE ARE SURE ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN PUTTING AMERICA DOWN IS IN ORDER ON ALL POINTS!!!
WHAT THE--?
AT LAST! SOMEONE HAS OPENED ONE OF MY GREAT MAGAZINES FROM THE FORTIES -- THUS FREEING ME 'N' ENABLING ME TO BATTLE AGAIN IN THE FRACUS FOR FREEDOM!!
POINT ME TOWARD MY UNWORTHY ENEMIES!!!
-HANLEY
HOO, BOY--YOU--FROM DC COMIC JUMBO--CAUKE.
YES! EVIL DR. HORTON INGENIOUSLY INCORPORATED ME IN ONE OF MY OWN COMIC BOOKS! I COULD ONLY BE FREED IF SOMEONE OPENED UP THAT BOOK!
THIS TIME I HAVE DONE THIS, BY:- SURRECTING THE LIFE AND CAREER OF ALL-AMERICAN Jack!!
UH, NO OFFENSE, JACK, BUT, YSEE, THESE COMICS BELONG TO MY DAD AND, UH, WELL... WHO THE HECK IS ALL-AMERICAN JACK, ER JACK??

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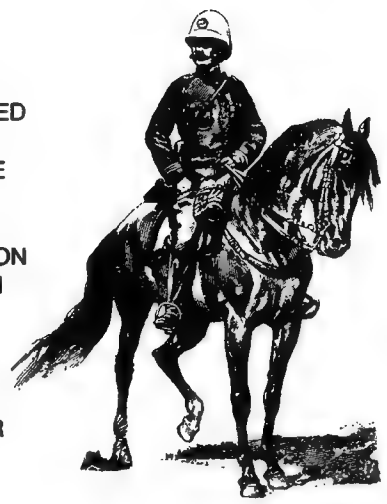

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SLiFERENCES

Okay! A lot of your (well, a couple anyway) are probably wondering who I am and how I happened to be writing for Poor Richard's Adzine. Well I am, as some of the more astute of you might have guessed (and some of the more intelligent among you may be doubting), a fan writer. I have written for Etcetera, Chronicle, and CPL (formally known as Contemporary Pictorial Literature) of which I share the co-editing blame with Bob Layton and Sterno.

Now, if you were paying attention you should have a clue as to how I happen to be writing for PRA. I mentioned that I did a couple of things for Chronicle. No doubt that you realize by the many ads I'm sure George has spread around this issue, that he is also editor of Chronicle. I met George thru a fellow GANG member Duffy Vohland who somehow had made George's aquaintance. Duffy knew I was looking for outlets for my somewhat questionable talents and hooked me up with George.

George and I have gotten along well, possibly due to the fact that we have a few things in common. For instance, our ability to throw the other into a panic over deadline dates. George asked me to write for PRA, I liked the idea, so, here I am! So much for the rather lengthy introduction. Assuming you're still with me let's get on to some other things. . .

You might be asking yourselves, "Why do I need Poor Richard's Adzine?"

And it's a very good question; after all, we aren't the only adzine in fandom. Very well, I'll tell you why I think you need PRA. Keep in mind these are my opinions. George didn't put me up to this and probably won't even agree with all of it. But I know he's too good an editor to cut out anything with which he disagrees (besides, I just appealed to his sense of fair play, heh, heh).

First of all, why should you buy us over The Buyers' Guide? Well, maybe because you, like myself and many other fans, have become displeased with the way Alan Light operates. I have heard many people complain how their ads have come back mutilated and unfit to send elsewhere. From past experiences with George, I have seen how he respects and handles original art. I've gotten things back better protected than the way I sent them! I'm sure George will handle your ads just as well.

Alan has even refused to run ads for potential competition like the Mirkwood Times! If Alan is so sure his "quality" is so much superior to an other adzines, why does he refuse to run their ads? He has even gone as far as censoring parts of other people's ads which state their support for another adzine!

You may have also become disgruntled by the way Alan gave the impression that he couldn't afford to distribute TBG free and had to start subscriptions. I found this a little hard to take myself when, by simple mathematics we discover Alan's ad revenue for one is in excess of $17,000. This is in addition to the $19,000 plus he gets from subscriptions! Sure, everybody's entitled to a fair profit; but isn't this a bit much for something that started out as a free adzine?!

But in addition to the above we have several advantages over TBG. For one thing we're a lot handier size--8½ by11. A lot easier to read and handle than a tabloid.

We're prettier. Well, you know, slicker. The types easier to read. Hopefully our articles will be the type that you'll want to save and reread. This isn't to say Alan doesn't have a talented writer or two working for him, he does. Marty Greim had an excellent piece a short while back on Inside Comix. But trying to save TBG is like trying to save old newspapers.

Next, you might wonder why I would suggest you buy Poor Richard's Adzine over Rocket's Blast. It's very easy--I won't! I suggest you buy them both!

Rocket's Blast has been around a long time. Over the years G.B. Love has amassed some of the best fan talent around; Howard Siegel, Ray Miller, James Van Hise, Larry Bigman, Don Rosa, and many others. But RBCC is rapidly becoming more and more an excellent article zine presenting a lot of good material on a variety of subjects; from the current comic scene, to the pulps, to the vintage work of Wood and Williamson; but they are getting away from being an adzine.

Of course the most important reason you should prefer to advertise in us over either TBG or Rocket's Blast is -- we're cheaper! Compare our rates! With the money you save you could buy a bigger ad, advertise more of what you have to sell, or just sit back and count your extra change!

Now you know why I feel you should support us. We're new, we need your help. Stick with us, huh.

I suppose I should take a little time out here to explain my aims for this column, First of all it is not exactly going to be a column for the verteran collector. It can't be. Mainly because most of the people into comics for over ten years or so probably know as much or more about the industry than I do.

Don't get me wrong -- I'm not planning on alienating the long-time fans from this column; I'll probably just lean a little more toward the newer fans. People who just aren't sure what is worth buying on today's market and what isn't.

Not only do I want this column to be a place for me to give my opinions on the comic industry, but also a place for you people to sound off. If you've got a particular beef about the industry or even if you've got some plaudits for someone in the industry. (too many people ignore the good things about comics just talk about the bad) tell me about it. If it's worthy of mention I'll pass it on.

Although it's possible for you folks our there to realize, a week has come and gone since the last paragraph. Several times I sat down and tried to write on various subjects; fandom apathy, the ignorance of being a completist, and the farce called Inside Comix. All subjects of interest that will probably all be covered in future issues of Poor Richard's. Whenever I sat down and tried to write on one of the subjects the words just wouldn't come out the way I wanted.

I have been brought our of my state of depression somewhat, by the purchase of a slew of top notch comics today; Conan, Defenders, Swamp Thing, Thor, and a few others. It's the development of one of these comic series that I'd like to delve into with the space left to me.

Roy Thomas is one of, if not the, best writers in comics today. However, I was strongly disapointed in the job he did on the Defenders. Of course he was working with three very established characters. He had to strive to keep continuity with their regular features, and there weren't m(any) facets of their characters he could develop and still stay within the framework of the strip. After all, realistically they probably wouldn't be together at all. But when you're looking for something with commercial potential. . .

Another thing that made me less than estatic about the book was the choice of artists. Ross Andru never did impress me as anything more than a middle-of-the-road penciller. So chosing him for the cover-blurbed "most fabulous fighting team of all" dulled my enthusiasm even more. Of course I'm also of the opinion that Ross shouldn't be allowed to hold the rather lofty position as the artist on Spiderman. He just isn't good enough!

The final blow came when, in Marvel Feature #3, they introduced Xemnu, the abominable teddy bear! (Whoops, did I let a touch of sarcasm slip in here?!)

Then, the first issue of the Defenders in their own title appeared. And it had a different writer and artist team than the previous adventures in Marvel Features; Steve Englehart and Sal Buscema. Steve Englehart was a fairly new writer at the time who showed promise and I knew he usually came up with at least one exceptionally funny line per comic. I was willing to give him a chance.

Sal Buscema was an artist who, in my opinion, had, up to this time, spent too much time in the shadow of his brother John. He was finally allowed to show his talents on this relatively new super-group. Sal is one of those artists who consistantly turns fine comic work, but is shoved out of the limelight by people with super-dynamic, jump off the page type stuff as, say, Adams or Kirby.

In issues two and three Englehart proved himself by bringing back the Silver Surfer. The Sky-rider was back in a very nicely done two parter.

I had a little inside info on the fourth issue of the Defenders. I heard the Valkyrie was to enter the group. Previous to this appearance I wasn't too impressed with this character. Aside from her spiffy costume there wasn't too much of this cliché spouting women's libber that I liked.

Besides, exactly who was the Valkyrie anyway? In her first appearance in Avenger #83 she was the Enchantress posing under a spell induced disquise in order to further her own ends.

Her second appearance was again the cause of a spell by the Enchantress, but was a transformed Samantha Parrington (who was, in reality, another cliché spouting women's libber). Neither the Enchantress nor Samantha Parrington seemed to be good Defender material in my opinion. So what was Englehart going to do, I wondered?

My question was soon answered. Englehart's formula? Take one insane female left over from last issue, mix in a spell from the aforementioned Enchantress, add the Black Knight's (who, by the way was a guest star that is) sword and winged stallion, and wha-LAH--- one very unique super-heroine.

Steve's characterization of Val (he had been doing quite an admirable job on the other members too) in this and the succeeding issues has risen Val from one of my least favorite female characters to probably my most favorite.

But did Steve stop there? Oh no! Next issue he threw Hawkeye at us. Steve kept him around for a couple of issues making us wonder if he was going to induct another member into the non-group and throw in a couple of good old baddies (old good baddies?) the Red Ghost and Attuma to boot!

The next couple of issues concerned Steve's summer length battle between Avengers and the Defenders. This was quite an intelligent move commerically, as well as entertainly; giving the Defenders exposure in such an established book as the Avengers.

Aside from the absurdity of the evil eye being divided into six identical pieces, it was very well done. From the Defenders battles I especially enjoyed the rematch of Iron Man and Hawkeye after all these years. The dialogue between them was handled quite realistically and right in character. And Sal Buscema's Mantis was very--ah, entertaining, to say the least.

The next issue wrapped up the plot of the previous two by using the evil eye they went to so much trouble to obtain. They used it to go back to the 12th century and help the Black knight find his place in time.

This story also contained one of my favorite one-liners, "This is a monster--but not our monster!" Sorry if it doesn't mean anything to you, but that's what you get for not reading the Defenders!

I won't even mention Defenders #12; mainly because it featured the return of the teddy bear from space (who, incase you heven't gathered isn't one of my favorite character).

Which brings us up to the most current issue of the Defenders--lucky #13. Why lucky 13 you ask? Well, I'll tell you. It's very hard to give a bad rating to a book that features a super-team that has (or their "earth two" counterparts have anyway) the potential of becoming one of the best super good guy groups in comicdom.

The Squadron Sinister has a snazzy name, well designed and colorful outfits, and are based upon the characters in their competition's most popular super-group! Now, with a combination like that, how could it fail?! But, being as how the people at Marvel insist on making them the heavies and how Len's probably going to blow any chances of a "Squadron Supreme" comic by inducting Night-hawk into the Defenders next issue, let's disect the Squadron's appearance this time around.

In Nighthawk's flashback we see that he is forced to meet with the rest of the S.S. because of a threat to expose his secret identity. He lands at the meeting place in his "Hawk-plane." Both of these things are very Batmanish circa the early sixties.

It was a very nice touch to have Nighthawk go to the Avengers first only to have his plan spoiled by the foresightedness of his partners. But... I don't see why Nebulon, if he has enough power to turn Nighthawk invisible and imprison the Defenders in an energy globe that even Val can't bust out of, needs the Squadron to build a laser for him. Since this is just the first part of the adventure I won't speak too rashly until I see how Len handles next issue. I just hope he remembers to tie up all his loose ends.

One of the things I liked best about Englehart's work on this trip was the thread of plot he kept running through the issues. A sign of a good writer is one that plans out his stories over a large number of issues rather than just one or two issues at a time.

Being fortunate enough to have heard Len at July Con run through about a years worth of his plots for the JLA I'm confident this is the way he'll operate on the Defenders. I only hope he'll characterize the Defenders as well as Englehart. Steve had such an excellent grasp of the characters. Time will tell...

I also hope under Len's hands that the Defenders will continue to be open to some guest stars for super-heroes who don't have their own strips. Say maybe a couple of the Inhumans or X-Men could step in for an issue or two. I just hope Len can resist making everyone he guest stars a member like he seems to be doing in the Justice League.

And although the Sub-Mariner's book is supposed to be discontinued in the near future (although I hope they wait until they get in sales figures on the post-Heck issues) I think it would hurt more than help the overall strip if Len is forced to give the Sub-Mariner a bigger part in the Defenders.

I've probably more than used up my alloted amount of space for this issue so I'd better cut it off here. As usual all comments or arguments to.....

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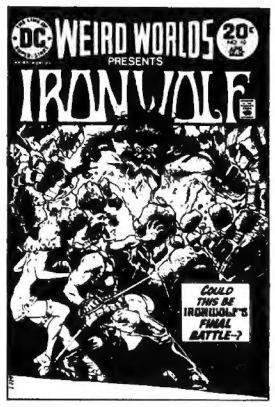

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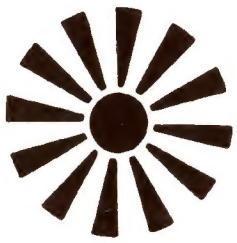

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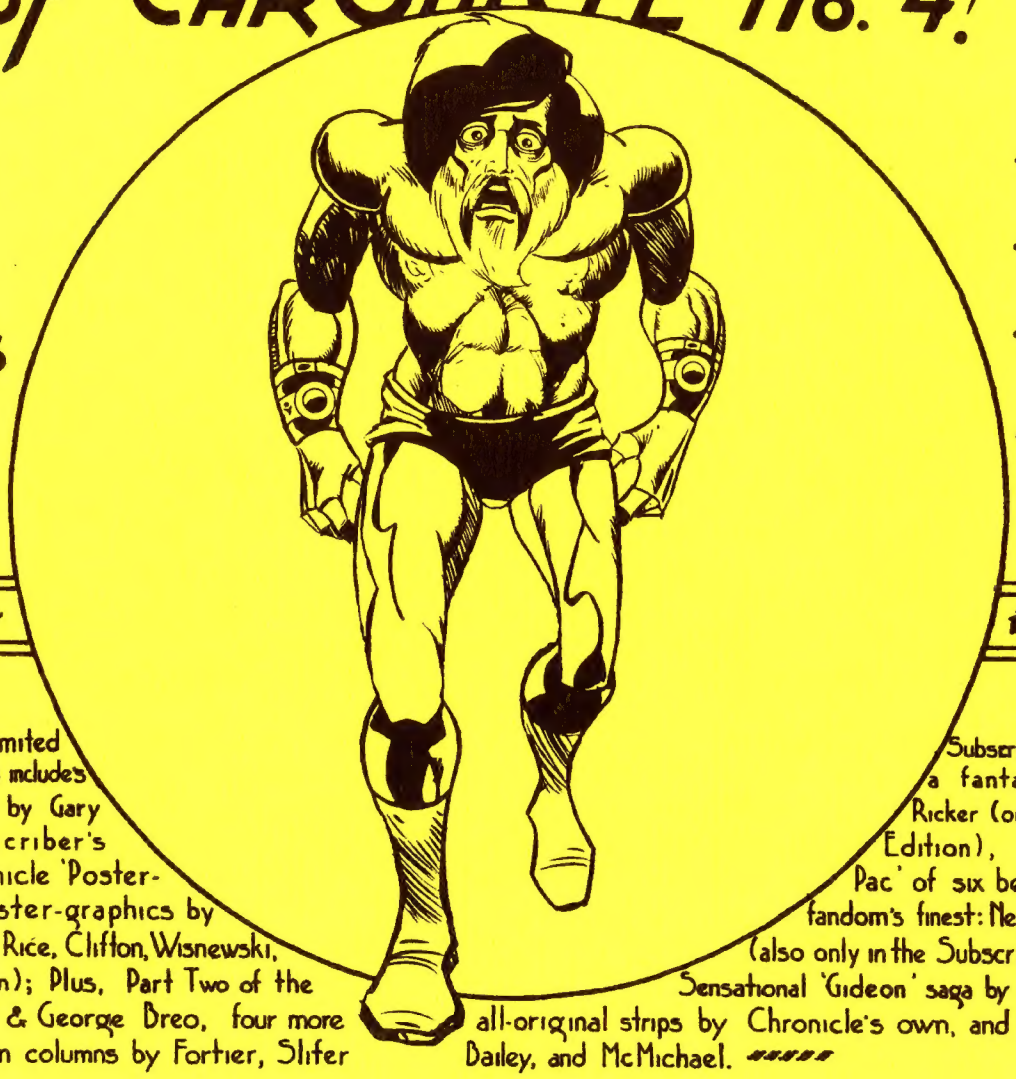

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